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EPISTLE

FROM THE

Women's Yearly Meeting at York, 1688.

AND

An EPISTLE from *Mary Waite*.

A TESTIMONY *for the Lord and his Truth, given forth by the women friends, at their yearly meeting, at York, being a tender ſalutation of love, to their friends and ſiſters, in their ſeveral monthly meetings, in this county, and elſe where, greeting.*

Dear friends and ſiſters,

WE, being met together in the fear of the Lord, to wait upon him for his ancient power, to order us, and, in his wiſdom and counſel, to guide us in our exerciſe relating to church affairs: It hath pleaſed him to break in among us in a glorious manner, to our great ſatisfaction, and he hath filled our meeting with his living preſence, and crowned our aſſembly with his heavenly power, and opened the fountain of life unto us, and cauſed the ſtreams of his love freely to flow among us, and run from veſſel to veſſel, to the gladding of our hearts, which cauſeth living praiſe, and hearty thankſgiving to be rendered unto him, who alone is worthy. And, friends, we hereby ſignify to you, that there hath been many living teſtimonies delivered among us from the divine openings of the ſpirit of life, in many brethren and ſiſters, whereby we are fully ſatisfied that the Lord is well pleaſed with this our ſervice, and doth accept our ſacrifices and free-will offerings,

and returns an anſwer of peace unto our boſoms, which is greatly our reward. Here hath alſo been brought ſeveral teſtimonies in writing from divers of our monthly meetings, to our great ſatisfaction, touching the care of friends for the honour of God, and proſperity of truth in one another. And, dear friends, in that unchangeable love and precious truth of our God, we dearly ſalute you, wherein our relation and acquaintance with him, and one with another, in ſpirit, is daily renewed, and our care and concern for his honour, and one another's good, is ſtill continued; and therein we ſee there is as great need as ever to watch over one another for good; tho' it hath pleaſed God, in his infinite mercy and love, to give us a day of eaſe and liberty, as to the outward, and hath broken the bonds of many captives, and hath ſet the oppreſſed free, and hath opened the priſon doors in a great meaſure: living praiſes be given him for ever! And now, friends, it is our deſire that we all may make a right uſe of it, and anſwer the end of the Lord in it, and neither take nor give liberty to that part in any which may give the Lord occaſion to ſuffer our bonds to be renewed, but in his fear and holy awe walk humbly before him, in a holy and ſelf-denying life, under the croſs of Chriſt Jeſus, *which daily crucifies us to the world, and the world to us*, and teacheth us to deny ungodlineſs, and worldly luſts, and to live righteouſly and ſoberly in this preſent world, that by our holy lives and righteous converſation, others, ſeeing our good works,

works, may glorify our heavenly Father, and that, by our truth-like and Chriſtian behaviour, and upright dealing in all our affairs among the children of men, we may walk as becomes the truth. And, dear friends, join not with any ſort of people further than will ſtand with truth's honour, and reach God's witneſs in every conſcience, but as much as in you lieth live peaceably with all men, and do good unto all, eſpecially unto the houſhold of faith, and ſo daily fulfill the royal law of love, in ſhewing to all men that you are Chriſt's diſciples, by loving him and one another. And, friends, we cannot but warn you of the ſeparating and quarrelling ſpirit which leads unto ſtrife, contention and jangling, and would thereby lay waſte your concern for God's honour, and one another's good; this is that old adverſary and enemy of mankind, who, in all ages, *went about like a roaring lion, ſeeking whom he might devour*, and, as a ravenous wolf, ſometimes gets the ſheeps cloathing, and never wants ſpecious pretences to accompliſh his deſign, and bring about his end, which is to divide, rend, tear, deſtroy and ſeparate from God and one another; and would lay waſte the heritage of God, and make ſpoil of his plantation, and leave his tender plants without care, in the briars and thorns, and every hurtful weed to wrap about them to hinder their growth, and draw them out of their order, by reaſon of which, as in the days of old, the way of truth might be evil ſpoken of. The Lord diſappoint him of his purpoſe, and fruſtrate him of

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his end, is our prayer, and keep him livingly ſenſible, that the end of the Lord, in all his fatherly corrections, gentle chaſtiſements, and kind reproofs, hath been to preſerve us from the ſnares of the enemy. Therefore, dear friends, be concerned for the preſervation of one another in every of your reſpective monthly meetings, and be faithful in performing your ſervice and duty to God, and to one another, as he opens it in you, and lays it upon you, in exhortation, admonition and reproof, in tender love, for ſo it will be as the balm of Gilead unto thoſe who are wounded by the wiles of the enemy; for, dear friends, it is the very end of our travel and labour of love, *that the hungry may be fed, the naked cloathed, the weak ſtrengthened, the feeble comforted, and the wounded healed.* So that the very weakeſt, and hindermoſt of the flock, may be gathered into the fold of reſt and ſafety, where no deſtroyer can come, where the ranſomed and redeemed by the Lord have the ſongs of deliverance and high praiſe in their mouths, giving him the honour, who alone is worthy for ever. And, friends, let us ever remember the tender dealing and mercies of the Lord to us, and that it was not for our deſerts, nor any worthineſs in us, but his own good will, and for his ſeed ſake, in which he heard our many cries, and had regard to our tears, and helped us through many exerciſes and trials inwardly and outwardly, and hath been our rock and refuge, and our ſure hiding place, in many ſtorms and exerciſes; and yet preſerves in perfect

peace

peace all those that trust in him, who keep his new creation full of joy; and the voice of thanksgiving and melody is heard in our land, and the Lord becomes unto us the place of broad rivers, and makes us before him as well watered gardens, and affects our hearts with his divine love to praise his name. And now to you young women, whom our souls love, and whom the Lord delighteth to do good unto, and hath visited with the tastes of his love, be you ordered by him in all things, that, in your modest and chast behaviour, your comely and decent dresses in your apparel, and in all other things you may be good examples to others, not only those that are without, but to some professing of the faith, that in the line of life, and language of truth, we may speak one to another and say, *Arise, ye daughters of Sion, shake yourselves from the dust of the earth*, put on the beautiful garments, even the robes of righteousness, the saints cloathing, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. And be not too careful for preferment or riches in this world, but be careful to know the Lord to be your portion and the lot of your inheritance. Then testimonies will arise as in the days of old; our lot is fallen in a good ground, we have large possessions. And, friends, be not concerned in reference to marriage out of God's fear, but first wait to know your Maker to become your husband and the bridegroom of your souls, then you will come to know that you are not your own, but that he must have the ordering and disposing of you, in

soul,

ſoul, body and ſpirit, which are all his; for he, being the only one unto you, and the chiefeſt of ten thouſand among you, will be your beloved and your friend. Oh! friends, this ſtate is happy, and bleſſed are they that attain it, and live in it; the Lord is not unmindful of them, but in his own time, if he ſee it good for them, can provide meet helps for them; then will your marriage be honourable, being orderly accompliſhed with the aſſent of parents, and the unity of friends, and an honour to God, and comfort to your own ſouls: then husbands and children are a bleſſing in the hands of the Lord, and you will ariſe in your day, age and generation, as mothers in Iſrael, as thoſe holy ancients whoſe living teſtimonies reacheth unto us, and bleſſed memories liveth with us according to our meaſures; as Lydia open hearted to God and one to another, as Dorcas careful to do one another good, as Deborah concerned in the common wealth of Iſrael, and as Iael zealous for the truth, who was praiſed above women. And you, friends, who are under the preſent concern, and in your day's work, do it not negligently, not with careleſs minds, but be you diligent in every of your womens meetings, and order two faithful women in every meeting to take the care upon them, and ſo far as may anſwer truth, do you endeavour that nothing be practiſed among you, but what tends to God's honour, and one another's comfort; let nothing be indulged or connived at in any, whereby truth is diſhonoured, and let that be cheriſhed and encouraged in all

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wherewith truth is honoured; and these our teſtimonies caſt not carelesly into a corner, but ſome time peruſe them, and mark well the wholeſome advice therein; that our travel may be anſwered, the Lord honoured, and you reap the benefit; and let a record be kept from month to month, and from year to year, of the Lord's dealing with us, and mercy to us, to future ages; that from age to age, and one generation to another, his own works may praiſe him, to whom all praiſes do belong, and be aſcribed both now and for ever. A

From our yearly meeting at York, the 28th of the 4th month, 1688.

Signed on the behalf of the meeting by

Catharine Whitton	*Mary Waite*
Judith Boulby	*Deborah Winn*
Elizabeth Sedman	*Eliz. Beckwith*
Frances Taylor	*Mary Lindley*

A WARNING *to all friends, who profeſs the everlaſting truth of God, which he hath revealed and made manifeſt in this his bleſſed day, whether on this ſide, or beyond the ſeas.*

Dear friends,

IN tender bowels of love do I feel, from the Lord, a warning ſpring in my heart to you, that you all may be kept low in his humble ſelf-denying life, where ſafety is to be found; for, aſſuredly, the great and notable day of the Lord is at hand, in which he will ariſe in the greatneſs of his ſtrength, to plead the cauſe of his ſuffering ſeed with all its enemies, whether within or without.

So all dear friends be faithful under your ſeveral diſpenſations; for in our Father's houſe are many manſions. Keep in the low vallies, for there will be your ſafety, there will the green paſtures of God's love be partaken of, and with ſuch will he delight to dwell. So, all friends, keep to your watch, that the day of the Lord come not in an hour you look not for it, and ſo you receive the unfaithful ſervant's reward; for indeed, friends, my ſoul is in a great travel for the proſperity of Sion, that her walls may be builded, her breaches repaired and made up; for, for many months, yea ſome years, hath my ſpirit been bowed down, and groaned under the ſenſe of an eaſeful, ſelfiſh, lukewarm

ſpirit,

ſpirit, that hath crept in upon many for want of watchfulneſs, and keeping to the daily croſs of Chriſt Jeſus, and in the narrow way and ſavoury life, that only will bring honour and praiſe to the name of the Lord. And how to be eaſed of theſe weights and burdens I did not know: my cry was to the Lord, that he would give me wiſdom and ſtrength to do his will. And it pleaſed him to lay his hand upon me, and bring me near to the gates of death, ſo far as I ſaw; and was pleaſed to hide himſelf from me, and my ſoul was in a languiſhing condition, and my cries were great unto the Lord, that he would not hide his face from me, but let me feel of his wonted goodneſs and mercy, by which I had received daily comfort and ſatisfaction from him in his unerring path, in which he had been pleaſed to lead me. And, at length, the Lord appeared, and ſaid he would be my phyſician, and cure my diſeaſe, and came in and comforted my ſpirit with his overcoming love, which greatly revived me. And in the openings of the bowels of his endleſs love, he ſhewed me a terrible day drew near, even, as one may ſay, at the door, and laid it upon me, to go warn his people in this city, and elſewhere, to depart from all filthineſs both of fleſh and ſpirit, from all lukewarmneſs, from the faſhions, cuſtoms and friendſhips of this world; from pride, covetouſneſs, and every ſin that ſeparateth from the Lord, and brings dryneſs, barrenneſs and deadneſs upon many, and makes as unſavory ſalt, that is good for nothing, but to be caſt forth and trodden upon.

And to warn them not to delay time, but come into the true humility, lowlineſs of ſpirit, and ſelf-denying life, that the Lord might be a hiding place to them, for terrible will that day be to all the unfaithful and diſobedient. All the ſinners in Sion ſhall be afraid, fearfulneſs ſhall take hold on the hypocrite, dread and horror ſhall ſurpriſe them. O whither will you unfaithful fly! Would you not be glad that either rocks or mountains could hide you from the preſence of the Lord, and the wrath of the Lamb? O this will be a terrible day indeed unto all thoſe that have had a form of godlineſs, but denied the power that would have ſaved them out of all defilements and pollutions of this world.

For long hath the ſpirit of the Lord been grieved with theſe, who have long come and ſitten among God's people, as if they had been of them, but never came to ſink down to the heart ſearching light of Chriſt Jeſus in them, that by it they might be cleanſed from all ſecret and open ſins, from every Dalilah that lodgeth in the boſom, as pride and covetouſneſs, which often the one attends the other; covetouſneſs, ſaith the ſervant of the Lord, is the root of all evil, and adviſed them to fly from it; but who abide not in the ſpirit of judgment, and of burning, which God hath prepared to purge away the filth of the daughter of Sion, their filth hath not been purged or done away, which cauſeth many miſcarriages, blots and ſtains, and great reflections have ſuch brought upon

on the bleſſed truth, and much dirt hath been thrown on the pure, holy, and undefiled way of the Lord, which he hath caſt up for the ranſomed to walk in, and ſo through the unfaithfulneſs and uneven walking of ſuch, the name of the Lord hath been greatly diſhonoured, his ſpirit grieved, and the hearts of the righteous made ſad. And many a wounded ſoul there is among the Lord's people, who are bowed under theſe weights and preſſures; but aſſuredly the day haſtens that every one muſt bear their own burden, and the Lord will eaſe his innocent ones, who have been bowed down before him, and have mourned and groaned under theſe things; yea the day haſtens, that the unfaithful and diſobedient ſhall bear their own burdens. And the Lord will ariſe for his own name and glory ſake, and will eaſe him of his enemies, and avenge him of his adverſaries, and take to himſelf his great power, that he may reign and rule in the hearts of his, that faithfully labour in his work, and order their converſations aright before him. His glory ſhall reſt upon them, for he will not give it to another ſeed or birth, but to Chriſt Jeſus the ſeed of the woman, who was given to bruiſe the ſerpent's head; he hath born the iniquities of all, and been preſſed under them as a cart with ſheaves; his face hath been more marred than any man's, and his voice not heard in the ſtreets, no beauty nor comlineſs ſeen in him; and, becauſe he hath been a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief, therefore hath he been paſſed by,

by, and not regarded, but the Lord will make him the joy of many generations, and his Sion the praiſe of the whole earth.

Therefore, dear friends, love him with all your ſouls, and be you delighted in him above all enjoyments whatever, that you may lie down in the boſom of his love, and be nouriſhed by his ſide, as children of our heavenly Father, begotten by the immortal word of life, to live and reign here in it, and, when time ſhall be no more, enter into that bleſſed reſt prepared for all thoſe that have obeyed his glorious goſpel; and though as yet we be but as the gleaning of the vintage, yet the Lord hath many to gather, yea the numberleſs number ſhall be gathered, and great will be the work of our God, which he is bringing to paſs in this his bleſſed day; it cannot be declared as it is ſeen and felt in the ſpirit.

So, friends, be faithful in the work of your day, be valiant for the Lord and his bleſſed truth; come up in the nobility of his life, and ſtand faithful witneſſes for him; for we are the city ſet upon a hill, yea battle axes in God's hand, though our weapons are not carnal, but ſpiritual and mighty, through the power of God, to the pulling down the ſtrong holds of ſin and ſatan. Friends, we are they whom the Lord hath raiſed to hold forth Chriſt Jeſus, whom he hath given for an enſign to the nations, unto whom all the ends of the earth muſt come for ſalvation.

So, dear friends, let your light ſhine forth before

fore men, that they may ſee your good works, and glorify your heavenly Father, ſo that by your godly life and holy converſation many may enquire the way to Sion.

All friends be faithful, and keep your meetings in the fear of the Lord; be diligent in his work, for the woe and curſe belongs to them that do the Lord's work negligently, or with careleſs minds, and it is come on ſome already, and will come more upon others, if by ſpeedy repentance they return not unto the Lord. So be zealous for the Lord and his truth, and, as much as in you lies, gather orderly together as near the time as poſſible, that the meeting is appointed at; for diſorderly coming hath been a hurt, and burdened the faithful, who dare not be negligent in the Lord's work, and often they have waited a conſiderable ſeaſon, and God's power hath been felt, and the manifold grace of God been diſpenſed among us, and then others come in and miſs of the counſels, admonitions and refreſhments, which the Lord, by the operation of his bleſſed ſpirit, hands forth to his people, and ſo, for want of zeal in coming duly to meeting, eſpecially on the week days, truth hath not grown in them, but ſuch have long travelled in the wilderneſs, and many carcaſes fallen there, and ſo, for want of zeal and faithfulneſs, the enemy hath crept in, and darkened many minds, where once there was tender good deſires raiſed after God. So all have need to be faithful, and wait diligently every opportunity the Lord gives you to

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feel your ſtrength renewed; for in the world are many incumbrances and intanglements, ſome on one hand, and ſome on another, to draw the mind from God, and but one to draw it to him; ſo there is great need of holy zeal and diligence, in obſerveing the time to wait upon the Lord to feel your ſtrength renewed, to help through the many things, and his power to ſtrengthen and ſupport, that in your families, and all your undertakings, you may be a good ſavour to the Lord, being guided by his wiſdom to rule and order your children and ſervants, and he will give authority to ſtand over every thing that is contrary to his witneſs. And in the fear of the Lord I warn and exhort all parents not to wink or connive at any ſin in your children, as you tender their everlaſting well being; let no ſin go unreproved or uncorrected, but take the wiſe man's counſel, who ſaith, *Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction muſt drive it out, and he that corrects his child ſhall deliver his ſoul from death.* So, friends, train up your children in the bleſſed truth and fear of the Lord, ſo may you have hope they will not depart from it when they are old. And take heed of giving way or ſuffering them to get into pride, and the vain and fooliſh faſhions, which are a ſhame to ſober people, and a great inlet to many evils, for they are prone to that by nature, and it may ſoon be ſet up, but hard to get it down. So, friends, keep the yoke upon that nature that is proud, ſtubborn, or diſobedient

obedient to parents, break that will in them betimes which comes from the evil one, and bend them while they are young, left when they grow up you cannot. And then you may ſorrow greatly when it is too late; for by your overlooking their folly or pride, the wrong nature grows in them to a ſtrong head, whereby you have helped them forwards in the broad way which leads to deſtruction, and their blood may come to be required at your hands. Ah, friends! friends! as much as in you lies keep down the evil, and the good will ariſe, then there will be room for the tender ſeed to grow up in them, and they will bleſs the Lord on your behalfs, for your love and care of their immortal ſouls.

And all maſters and miſtreſſes of families, keep in the dominion of truth, that in it you may rule over every unclean thing, and wrong ſpirit, that is contrary to the Lord, that you abiding in him who is the higheſt power, and higher than the powers of darkneſs, may in it keep your authority in your families; and look that all be kept ſweet and clean out of the condemnable ſtate, firſt in yourſelves, and then in your families, to ſee that all wildneſs, wantonneſs and rudeneſs, be kept under by the power, yea every thing that would blot or ſtain the precious truth. And then if the Lord requires any ſervice or teſtimony of any of you, for his name and bleſſed truth, that all may be clear in yourſelves, and juſtified by God's wit-

neſs, that you have ſtood in his counſel and authority in your families, and been good examples in life and converſation, by keeping your own houſes in order, and ruling there for God; then may you openly with boldneſs appear for the Lord, and threſh down ſin and every evil way, in the power and authority of his life, that none may have any thing to accuſe any of you on the accounts above mentioned. And, dear friends, all keep in the ſavoury life; but more eſpecially you who are drawn forth to bear publick teſtimony for the Lord and his bleſſed truth, keep you to the watch, that at all times, places, and on all occaſions, your lives may preach for God, by a clean unſpotted converſation, which is the crown of all the faithful, who labour in the work of the Lord, and are upright before him; his glory ſhall reſt upon them, and their reward is ſure.

Now unto all you young people, ſons and daughters, apprentices, men or maid ſervants, all that are convinced of God's truth, and the way that leads to everlaſting life and happineſs, be you all faithful to God's witneſs in you, and mind the motions and operations of it, that thereby you may be changed, and all judge out what's contrary to his pure witneſs; let not your minds wander, neither look at the vanities in this world, for Chriſt's kingdom is not of it, nor to be found in pride, wantonneſs, and luſt of the fleſh, the faſhions, cuſtoms, and friendſhips of this world,

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for the devil is the king of pride, and all its antecedents, that lead to the gates of hell and everlasting destruction, where there is woe and misery, and that for ever more, where the worm never dies, the fire never goes out; so all you young and tender ones, where desires are begotten after God, keep you low in his fear, and to the daily cross, that all the contrary may be crucified, and all the enmity slain upon it. For every one that will be a disciple of Christ Jesus must come into the self-denying life. You cannot have two kingdoms; so my advice to you all is, stoop to Christ's appearance in you, he who invites all to come and learn of him, who is meek and lowly, and you shall find rest to your souls. So all be faithful in your several places and the exercises you may be under, that you may grow in grace, and in the fear and wisdom of God. Let not your eyes look out at others, but mind your own conditions; for, if you do, it will spy many faults in others, and may be overlook more at home. This hinders the growth of many, so all wait low within to feel your growth in the blessed truth, and know how the work goes on, and whether thou feel God's love, mercy and goodness, renewed to thee day by day, or not; for your accounts will be for the deeds done in your bodies, and not for others, so every one is to labour to know your calling and election made sure.

And you that are apprentices keep in the truth, love and obey it, for it will keep you faithful in your places, and out of every deceitful way, performing them not with eye ſervice, but with ſingleneſs of heart, as unto the Lord, from whom you muſt receive a reward. And if the enemy entice, conſent not, though he come in with never ſo fair pretences, That thou mayeſt deceive thy maſter, and it will never be known, &c. or purloin or waſte his Goods: believe him not, he is a liar, and the father of lyes; for there is an eye that ſees in ſecret, which will bring all the hidden deeds of darkneſs to light, and every work to judgment. So as thy work is, ſhall be thy reward. But fear the Lord and obey his voice in thee, and he will deliver thee out of every unclean way and polluted path, by his dear ſon Chriſt Jeſus, whom he hath given for a high way of holineſs, and a reſtorer of paths to dwell in. Glory to his Name for ever ſaith the redeemed, who are now returning unto Sion with ſongs of deliverance in their mouths, and everlaſting high praiſes are ſounded unto him, by thoſe whoſe garments are made white in the blood of the Lamb, for Sion's redeemer is come, the taker away of ſin and iniquity is made manifeſt, the mourners in Sion comforted, the weary travellers are refreſhed, the feeble knees are ſtrengthened, the broken ſpirit bound up, and the wounded ſoul hath oil poured in: who can

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but rejoice and be exceeding glad? for he hath put a new ſong in our mouths, he hath given his people beauty for aſhes, and, inſtead of heavineſs, the ſpirit of praiſe. All that know him will ſpeak well of his name, for all the noble acts he hath brought to paſs for his children. My ſoul is greatly affected in the remembrance of the Lord's numberleſs mercies (to me) and a little remnant whom he hath plucked as brands out of the fire, to ſhew forth his praiſes, and declare of his goodneſs in the land of the living, to hold forth Chriſt, the way to the Father, to the nations, that his ſcattered ſeed may be gathered from all the ends of the earth.

So I have cleared my ſpirit of what hath long lain upon me, and diſcharged my conſcience, in delivering the Lord's meſſage faithfully, according to the ability he hath given me. And ſo am clear in my ſpirit: The Lord ſet it home upon every heart whom it may concern, and that it may be received in the ſame bowels of love it was given forth. Then ſhall I have my reward, and the Lord his glory. And ſo ſhall return to my tent, and enter into the hole of the rock, where ſafety is to be

be found, till the indignation be over past; and in the endless unchangeable love of God do I salute you, and bid you farewel in the Lord.

MARY WAITE.

York, the 10th of the 2d month, 1679.

Let this be read in friends meetings, when they are gathered together, in the fear of the Lord, and in his weighty savoury life.

FINIS.